

Every Man's Servant

Scripture; Matthew 23; 1 to 12

Text Matthew 23; 11

He who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Our theme for this years laymens Sunday is "Every man's servant." Before we can begin to understand the theme we must first understand what the word servant means. Webster defines servant as being a person employed to perform services. A person ardently devoted to another or a cause. So as Christians we can safely say that we are to be employed by Christ to perform duties and services. And as Christians we should be ardently devoted to the cause of Christianity. But how can we function as servants? We must first prepare ourselves to be servants. Now you may ask how do I do this? How do I go about preparing to be a servant of Jesus Christ? This is probably the most difficult part, the preparation. The first step that we servants should take is to take out Bibles and read and study the four Gospels. This will give us a good insight into what is required of a servant. Christ is the prime example of a servant. After we have done the required reading we should sit down and take stock of ourselves to see where we can best fit into the servants role.

This will require a methodical taking of personal notes. We can jot them down if we feel so inclined. Most of us know ourselves fairly well. We know our weak points and we also know our strong ones. So this note taking will take on an aspect such as this. Well let's see now, I can sing a little maybe I could sing in the church choir. I talk a lot and I like to speak, possibly I could take a class and put my knowledge to work. I like to make things perhaps the church has a list of things that need made or repaired. And so our list can go on and on until we have exhausted what we can and cannot do. After we have listed all the things we can do we need to know where best we can serve. To find this out we must confer with someone about this and the most logical one is God. Yes I said God. There are some Christian people today who feel that prayer is a thing of the past. No need to pray because we can work out our own lives without any help. And He doesn't

answer prayer anyway. And we go to Church on Sunday and the minister gets up in front of the Altar and prays and this should carry us through the week. Strange as it may seem some people have this attitude. But those of us who pray and know that God answers prayer know this to be the way to conduct our lives. We have but to cast our burdens upon Him and He will show us what to do. So we have taken the first step in the preparation of being a servant.

The second logical step would be to act like a servant. For some time the word servant has been erroneously used. When we think of a servant we think of a maid, a butler, a valet, a chauffeur or a waiter. The popular conception is that for lack of intelligence or education this is the only means of earning a livelihood these people have. In other words someone who is a servant is more or less beneath our social level. And this is the very thing Christ is pointing out to us as we heard in our Scripture this morning. He says, "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant." No one is any better in the sight of God than any one else. No class distinction, no social status, no caste system nor any other means of setting us above or apart from our fellowman can ever put us in God's favor. Indeed these are the very things that can keep us from the grace of God. We must always try to be humble as we go about our Christian duties. But here again is where we run into problems. Because to some people this serving business only goes so far. Most of us have heard people say, I've done my share, let someone else do it for a while. Or why do they always ask me to do these jobs there are other people in the church besides me. So as a result we keep passing the buck and the jobs don't get done in the church. Or they are performed by a small overworked group. Whereas if we each one would assume our proper place in the church and accept our role as a servant the work of the church would be furthered and we would be doing the bidding of our Saviour. Did Christ pass the buck when it came to being a servant?

We know He didn't. No person was too small or in significant for Him to minister to. He spoke and ate with those who were considered outcasts. He healed those who were considered unclean. He helped those who were considered unworthy of help. If Christ was willing to act like a servant, can we do any less?

The third logical step is to obey like a servant. Here is where we really run into difficulties. Christ has given us the challenge to follow Him. To follow Him implies that we must be servants as He Himself was a servant. We must obey His commands and do what He wants us to do. This is what bugs most of us. We like to think that we are doing pretty good without any demands upon us. We live pretty good lives. After all don't we go to church fairly regularly? Or at least as often as we can provided something more important hasn't come along. We give what we can to the church. What more do we have to do to be a good Christian? Isn't this enough?

If we begin to think seriously about questions such as these and answer them truthfully we all can start to squirm a little. Because we know that we all could do more than we are for Christ. In our modern twentieth century Christian church it is a sad commentary indeed to see how lightly Christ is taken. In this country of ours which is supposed to be one of the most religious in the world we can't muster enough men and women to fill our pulpits: we can't get enough teachers for our church schools: and we can't get enough workers for all the other miscellaneous jobs and duties of the church. Why is this so? The truth is we are unlike Christ in one great respect. We come to be ministered to and not to minister. Whereas Christ came to minister and not be ministered to. We can give up our time to belong to the Moose, the Elks or other fraternal orders. We can find time to play golf, to bowl, to swim and other forms of recreation. We can find time to do a hundred and one things but we cannot find time to serve our Lord. Now don't get me wrong. The Moose, the Elks and other fraternal groups

are fine organizations. And bowling, golfing, swimming and other forms of recreation are good for us. But the truth of the matter is too often these things stand in our way of being servants of Christ in our Church and in our communities. Not too long ago our Church school curriculum had a lesson on, "Commitment to Christ." This is one subject about which I feel very strongly. I tried to impress upon the girls and boys in my class that this is something we should not take too lightly. When we promise to accept Christ and follow Him we should do so knowing full well that it means all the time and not just when we feel like it. Our Lord and His service should come before all else in our lives. Everything else we do is secondary ~~xx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ to this.

When I was a boy in Sunday school we sang a hymn which I liked very much. For one thing it had a catchy tune and a wonderful chorus. Maybe some of you will remember it too. The chorus goes like this.: "Where He leads me I will follow, where He leads me I will follow, where He leads me I will follow, I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way." I have often wondered why we don't use hymns like this our churches and church schools today. In fact we don't even include them in our newer hymn books. Perhaps it's because we are not as much concerned with following Christ as servants today as we were a few years ago. When we look at the way Christ obeyed as a servant we must certainly be ashamed for the obedience we show. Here was the Son of God obeying to the point that He even died for us. Now did He do this just matter of factly or did He have misgivings about this? We know from the Gospel accounts that He had misgivings. We read where He prayed that God should remove the obligation from Him. But when He saw that it was God's will He obeyed. Obedience is a very difficult thing to learn. We like to do the things we want to do. But oh how we dread doing what we should do. To school ourselves in the art of obedience, each time we are tempted to shirk what we should do we should each one try to remember the supreme sacrifice which Christ endured for us.

The next time someone approaches us and asks us to be a servant in any capacity, before we quickly blurt out that we don't have the time or some other lame excuse, let us each recall our role as a servant of Christ. And let us each one try to commit our lives more fully to Him. St. Francis of Assisi sums up very nicely what I have been trying to say when he wrote

"O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled,

as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

It is in giving that we receive.

Let us pray.